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HUMAN BIRTH – ITS SUPREMACY

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Of all the varied God's creations human birth is the most exalted and the most difficult to attain.Basically there are three types of birth : 1. Divine birth, 2. Human birth, and 3. Animals' birth. We will now learn how these births are got and the distinguishing characteristics of each of them.

A human being does a variety of acts during his life tenure. He has to reap the fruits of his deeds. The fruits of his actions done in several previous births accompany him all through. When only the meritorious deeds alone come to fruition, he takes divine birth in heaven and enjoys all type of pleasures and luxuries since that is a world earmarked for pleasures and no sorrows. But so long as he is in heaven, he can only enjoy luxuries based on his past good deeds, but he does not have the authority to do fresh acts. It is not open for him to perform any meritorious deeds to attain eligibility for salvation or see the vision of *Paramatma*. At the termination of the fruits derived by his previous good acts, he must get back to *Marthya Loka* or human world.

Again he gets into the cycle of births and deaths. In heaven one is endowed with mere sensory organs which enable him to enjoy joys and pleasures, but he does not possess the human body which is an essential medium for performing actions. So the divine birth is not of any avail in the attainment of salvation or reaching the Almighty.

In the other case where the aggregate of sins committed by a human being ripen for enjoyment he takes the birth among animals, insects, birds, worms and germs through despicable processes of creation depending on the intensity of sinful acts committed by him. During this birth the *Jeeva* suffers all types of humiliations and tortures. In this birth the Jeeva is not endowed with the power of discrimination, but only with body and mind. Hence all the actions done now are not done with any deliberation but only with impulse provided by instinct. Hence during this birth the Jeeva is not competent to do any act towards attainment of Moksha, but can only enjoy the fruits of his deeds in the previous births. Thus the animal birth fails to achieve any thing or do any acts necessary to promote him to a higher stage and to have a vision of the Almighty.

Let us now consider the third aspect where the fruits of merits and sins begin to yield mixed results. In this case Jeeva takes the birth of a human being. During this phase he is subjected to enjoy pleasures and joys yielded by his past good deeds as also sorrows and afflictions thrust upon him through his past sins. Thus while enjoying the fruits of his previous merits and sins, man is in a position to do fresh actions. In this state he is blessed with body, mind and intellect and through their medium he is empowered to perform deeds (Karmas) with discrimination and deliberation. Thus human birth has the authority and opportunity to perform such meritorious deeds that enable him to reach Paramatma. Hence this birth is looked upon as the one that excels all other births and as the most difficult to attain. Since human birth is got after passing through all the 84 lakhs of living species,

Sankaracharya describes it in his' Viveka chudamani' as one that is the most difficult to attain. "*Jantunam Nara Janma Durlabham*". So it is upto all the human beings to strive hard to make this highly exalted and excellent birth a worthy one.

HOW TO MAKE THIS BIRTH WORTHY

Generally all the human beings think and act in a similar fashion. Every one aspires to acquire things which make his life pleasant and comfortable. His ultimate aim is to become highly rich and enjoy life with his wife and children with all pomp and unending joys. But none is able to reach the point of complete satisfaction. The desires are endless and nonfulfilment persists at all stages and leaves the person discontented in so many ways. The reason for this lies in the transcient nature of the pleasures and joys he seeks. Everlasting and perfect bliss can be attained only through an object of permanence and sublimity and Paramatma is the only entity of eternal existence. Sankaracharya states this in his

"Tatwa Bodha" as "Nitya Vastvekam Brahma Tadvyati riktam sarvam Anityam"

It is therefore evident that until and unless man achieves the blissful joy from God the everlasting phenomenon, he does not rest contented. To attain that permanent bliss should be the ultimate aim and fulfillment of a worthy life. This eternal bliss is otherwise termed as salvation or emancipation from all the wordly attachment or bonds.

BONDS EXPLAINED

Bonds are nothing but results of our actions. Whatever acts we keep on doing through innumerable births become the fruits and do not leave us, but bind us to this world. Impelled by desires, we perform so many deeds and acquire through them all types of riches and possessions. But these material acquisitions do not go with us after death. But the actions, reflections and other thoughts which we adopt accompany us transforming themselves into effects of our deeds and fasten us to this world. And as long as these bondages last we are bound to the cycle of births and deaths with this body. In order to get liberation from these births and attain permanent bliss, we have to make an effort to free ourselves from the bondages. But how to get rid of the bonds ? For that we need clear perception of the Theory of Karma.

THEORY OF KARMA EXPLAINED

What the constitution does for the governance of a country, the Path of Karma does for the conduct of creation as a whole.

The Constitution of a country is conceived and framed by human genius, hence it is prone to go wrong somewhere and amendments become necessary from time to time. And it provides for some exemptions also to certain sections of the society.

On the other hand the path of Karma is evolved by the Almighty and hence it is permanent and flawless. No one can claim any exemption from its operation. There is no room for nepotism, favouritism and other corrupt practices in its implementation. All are equal before it.

Inspite of his being the father of lord Sri Rama, Dasaratha could not escape the pangs of separation from his beloved son which resulted in his death. Though Devaki and Vasudeva were the parents of Sri Krishna, an incarnation of God Srimannarayana, they had to suffer hard jail life and they could not avert the sorrow resulting from their son's separation. Thus the path of Karma takes its course based on the actions done by an individual and is just like an edict which is inviolable.

Karma (Action) Defined

The word Karma has more than one sense. Rituals and the like also come under Karmas besides activity in general. Thus whatever deeds we do from morning till the time of our sleep in the night, are all Karmas. Every human being keeps on performing acts from birth to death and such acts yield results. Even the fruits of the acts are called Karmas. It is a certainty that every act yields fruits. Depending upon the time taken by actions to produce results they are classified into three divisions. They are :

1) Agami Karmas (Current Acts) 2) Sanchita Karmas (Accumulated Acts) and 3) Prarabhdha Karmas (such of the accumulated Karmas which ripen and become ready for being experienced by the human being are termed Prarabhdha Karmas)

1. Agami Karmas (Current Actions)

Whatever actions we do now are to be classified as Agami Karmas. Of these some yield instant results and withdraw from further

operation. Some others remain dormant for the time being and get accumulated for giving results in future at the appropriate time.

Take for instance our taking food when we are hungry. Our hunger is immediately satisfied. Here taking food is an action and satisfaction of hunger is the result of the act. Similarly when we feel thirsty, we drink water. Our thirst is quenched at once. Here too drinking of water is an act and quenching of thirst is its result. Let us consider another case. When we get angry against a person, we beat him. If the other person is in a position to retaliate, he will return the blow. While our beating the person first is an action, the other man returning the blow is the result of our act. In all the above cases we observe that our acts produce instant results and get dissolved.

Yet, there are some actions which do not produce immediate results. Let us take a case where we curse a person, accusing him of some misdeeds, in his absence. Since that person is not before us, there is no reaction or result for our act. So also when we do charities or meritorious deeds we do not reap the result immediately. Similarly when our children appear for examinations the results are known only after some months. So in these latter instances the Karmas remain inert for a certain period for yielding results at a future point of time. These are also called current actions or Agami Karmas.

II. Sanchita Karmas (Accumulated Acts)

Of the total Karmas performed in a birth some yield instant results and get dissolved. The rest get stored for yielding fruits in the coming births. Similarly some deeds done in earlier births also might get accumulated and both these types of Karmas are carried forward.

The above two categories of *Karmas* come under the classification of Accumulated *Karmas* or '*Sanchita Karmas*'. It is note – worthy that even though Jeeva sheds off his body due to death, the accumulated karmas do not leave him, but accompany him to the next births till their fruits become ripe for enjoyment.

When we change rented houses we carry with us all our belongings from the previously occupied house to the new house. Similarly when Jeeva leaves the body, which can be compared to a rented house let out by God, he carries forward all the *Sanchita Karmas* (accumulated fruits) acquired by his *Karmas* done in the course of the previous births and enters another suitable body (or a rented new house) kept ready by God. These reserves of Karma fruits which the Jeeva carries from birth to birth are Accumulated Karmas or '*Sanchita Karmas*'.

III. Prarabdha Karmas

We have learnt how the Jeeva carries forward with him the Accumulated Karmas from birth to birth. Such of the said Karmas which become ripe for enjoyment in the current birth are called *Prarabdha Karmas* as far as that birth is concerned. Jeeva enters a body appropriate for its occupation based on the *Prarabdha Karmas* and emerges into the world with that body. That body lasts till the completion of enjoyment of the *Prarabdha Karmas*. Till that time, the Jeeva dwells in that body and leaves it the next moment the enjoyment is fulfilled. Till that moment, however hard the *Jeeva* may endeavour

or whatever steps he may take , they will not be of any avail to him in leaving that body.

In this process this birth ends as soon as the enjoyment of *Prarabdha Karma* is completely over. But the Accumulated Karmas pertaining to the prior births still remain and to them are added those that are acquired during the current birth. From this sum total of Karmas, those that come for fruition are take as *Prarabdha Karmas* and the Jeeva enters an appropriate body and taken birth to fulfill the enjoyment of such *karmas*. In this way the wheel of birth and death rotates.

Sankaracharya propounds in the following lines extracted from his 'Bhajagovindam', the same truth.

"Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Janani Jathare Sayanam"

These lines convey that the Jeeva has to pass through innumerable number of births and deaths and for every birth has to enter the mother's womb and suffer the attendant pangs. Where is the end of this cycle of births and deaths then? When does he get liberation from this chain ? Is there not a way to get salvation and attain the state of eternal bliss ? Yes, there is. Godmen have shown us the way and it is discussed in the following chapter.

How to get liberation from the cycle of Births and Deaths

Let us now examine the causes of birth in this world. Birth occurs where *Prarabdha Karmas* remain to be enjoyed. In the absence of *Prarabdha Karmas* there is no birth. If so where from do these *Prarabdha Karmas* arise? They result from such of the *Sanchita Karmas* which ripen

for enjoyment. Then how do these accumulated karmas make their appearance ? Such of those actions which still remain after exhaustion of the ripened ones by enjoyment are carried forward to the next birth and they are called 'the Accumulated Karmas'. If we therefore wish that there should not be accumulated karmas in our lives, there should be cessation of all activities or quiietism. But in worldly life it is not possible to desist from performing actions. Here it is relevant to quote Bhagavan's postulation in 'Geeta'.

"Na hi kaschit Kshanamapi Jatu Tisthatya Karma Krut".

'As long as life lasts one keeps on doing one act or the other' is what is sought to be conveyed in the above expression.

The same concept is stated in '*Esavasyopanishat*' in the following lines :

"Kurvanneveha Karmani Jijeevishet Chchatagum samah
Evam Twayi Nanyathetosti Sakarma lipyate nare".

One has to keep on doing *karmas* and live for hundred years in this world, there is no other way. Actions by themselves do not fetch disrepute to man. So one has to continue doing acts all through his life. This is the gist of the above *mantra*.

Choosing the Right Type of Karmas

We have considered that by abstaining from doing acts we can emancipate ourselves from further births. We have also seen how it is impossible for any body to live without doing any act. So what is left to us is to select such types of deeds which save the Jeeva from further births.

If we do sinful and contemptible acts we are bound to take despicable births. On the otherhand if we perform meritorious and virtuous deeds we are ordained for divine births and become eligible to enjoy happy and comfortable lives. Similarly if we perform both meritorious as well as sinful acts, we attain human birth and be subjected to enjoy pleasures as well as miseries. Thus in all the above three cases the Jeeva is bound by the bondage of his acts and has to pass through the ordeal of one type or the other of births.

Meritorious deeds yield golden shackles. Sinful acts give iron shackles. But both are shackles and bind the *Jeeva*. So, in essence, while there is no escape from doing any act, there is also no escape from reaping the results of such acts. In the ultimate analysis of things, man has to elect such acts and do them in such a way as the acts will not yoke him to their fruits. How to choose the method of doing actions by which he is not bound by their results is discussed below.

1) While performing Agami Karmas, we must choose such deeds which yield immediate fruits and avoid those which give results on a future date. This process will avert the scope of fresh fruits being generated by our acts. And since the fruits yielded by our actions are enjoyed immediately there is no accumulation of fruits.

2) In the case of *Prarabdha Karmas* we have to wipe them out by enjoying them exhaustively, without getting effected.

3) But the real trouble springs up in respect of *Sanchita Karmas*. When they are not ripe we cannot enjoy them and remove them from the scene : nor is it open to us to be wary about them in this birth, since they are there as a result of our actions performed during several

previous births. And to attain a state of their total extinction, we need to pass through myriad number of births. So the only way of rescuing ourselves from these accumulated karmas is to burn them all at one time. We will now learn how this is made possible.

In the above paragraphs we have seen how we have to aim at getting rid of the three different types of karmas and their fruits. In the absence of karmas and the accompanying fruits, we are free from bondages. And consequently there will be no births and the attendent miseries. That is the ultimate state of eternal bliss which we should attain. But the crucial problem lies in cultivating the right type of effort and adopting the correct path to get emancipation from the bondages comprehensively. To achieve that end we need enlightenment. And Bhagavadgita, which is a treasure house of *Yoga and Upanishadsara*, is the only guide which can lead us on to the right path to salvation.

The first six chapters teach us about how to do karmas and how we have to avert the culmination of current actions into Accumulated Karmas through *Karma Yoga*.

In the same way, how to liquidate the *Prarabdha Karmas* after enjoyment through *Bhakti yoga* is dealt with in chapters 7 to 12 with a discussion of the six - fold aspects of devotion.

Finally in chapters 13 to 18 Bhagavan elucidates the six aspects of *Jnana* and how to burn the accumulated *karmas* in the fire of *Jnana* or knowledge through *Jnana yoga*.

Our aim is therefore to understand and assimilate the means and secrets of attainment of the sublime state of *Nirvana*, after freeing

ourselves from the bondages, taught by Bhagavan in Bhagavadgita through *Karma, Bhakti* and *Jnana Yogas*. Let us now have a glimpse of the secrets and means expounded by Bhagavan in the said chapters.

A) AGAMI KARMAS - PERFORMANCE WITHOUT BEING BOUND BY BONDAGES

Whatever we do at the present time is *Agami Karma* and we are bound to reap the fruits of such deeds. This is what is ordained by karma theory. In the result the fruits of our actions turn to bondages. In this context Bhagavan preaches us in the Karma Yoga or Buddhi Yoga of Geeta about the means we have to employ for escaping the tie-up of the bondages to us while performing the current acts. Those means are :

1) Performing the act without being conscious that you are the doer :

2) Performing the act without the least aspiration for its fruits.

3) Doing the act entirely for the welfare and benefit of all the living beings and to please the Almighty.

4) Performing the acts in the dedication of God.

Elucidation : -

1) To perform acts with the feeling and awareness that you are not the doer

Normally whoever does an act he will be the recipient of its fruit because he feels he is the doer. But when one does an act being fully conscious that he is not the doer but he does the act as agent of God then the fruit of his deed goes to the *Karta* or the principal but does

not touch the individual. Here the individual has to perform the act not with the feeling of a doer but with the awareness of a man bound by duty.

Take the case of a person who kills his enemy out of rage. This is done with full deliberation and he becomes the doer of the act. Hence he has to suffer its consequences or the fruit of his act of murder.

Suppose an executor kills a criminal by hanging him in pursurance of a judicial order, the executor does the act under a duty. Hence he does not receive the fruits of his act.

Similarly when a judge inflicts capital punishment to a murderer, he does that act in accordance with the law of the land. Here too the judge is not the actor but a person acting under an obligation towards law.

So one has to perform acts being fully conscious that he is not the doer, but he is doing it in the capacity of a person under obligation to do the said act. In other words he should feel that he is an instrument in the hands of God and under an obligation to execute His will. "God is the ordainer and I am only an actor under him" should be his feeling. And this attitude should prevail invariably in all situations.

Consider the case of a ryot who grows a garden. With fragnant flowers and luscious fruits the garden is highly attractive and becomes cynosure for the viewers. If a passerby, seeing the garden, asks the ryot, "Who is it that has grown this splendid garden", the ryot answers with pride that he is the sole person that grew it. Later on when a cow entering into the garden destroys most of the plants, the ryot beats the cow with a stick and the cow dies. When the persons living in the

neighbourhood see the cow being killed by the ryot, warn him that he has to suffer the consequences of doing cow slaughter, the ryot argues, "It is the stick that hit the cow, and it is my hand that held the stick. The hand is a unit which can perform and Indra is the commanding God for the hand. Hence if any sin is attributable to cow slaughter, Indra is the target, but not I". When the question of receiving compliments for growing a beautiful garden arises, the ryot proudly claims that he is the doer, but when the issue of owning the responsibility for the sin arising out of cow slaughter comes up, he takes the plea that he played the part of a person under obligation. This is a clear case of selfishness where philosophic tenets are given perverted interpretation.

2) Performing acts without selfish desire.

In this world whoever does an act, he does it with an eye on its fruits. A normal man considers doing an act without selfish desire as foolish and unwise.

But if acts are done with a desire to enjoy the resultant fruits, those fruits become bondages. When we do good deeds like worshipping God, giving charities etc., we expect to reap positive benefits. And such benefits are a certainty. But of what use are these benefits ? They enable us to be born in heaven and enjoy all types of pleasures and joys. But as soon as the fruits of our *Karma* become extinct, we are thrown back to the human world. Being in heaven we cannot perform further meritorious deeds necessary to elevate us to enter God's kingdom. For, heaven is a place for enjoyment of luxuries but not for doing *Karmas*. Whatever acts we have to do for reaching

the Almighty, can be done only in this world. There is therefore no use performing deeds for the sake of fruits. So Karma is not our real enemy but kama or desire is our virtual foe. Hence the necessity of doing acts without any selfish desire. That is the reason why at the end of every ritual of worship, we utter the mantra. "*Etat phalam sarvam Parameswararpanamastu*" which means that whatever fruit that results out of this rituals shall be dedicated to God.

So we have to restrict our role while fulfilling a deed. That is, we should have no concern for the result that comes out of it. This concept has been started by Bhagavan thus :

"Karmanyevadhikaraste Maaphaleshu Kadachana
Makarma phala heturbhuh Mate sangostwaKarmani."

(II Chapter 47th verse)

So our part ends with the completion of a deed. We shall have no desire for the fruits and the same shall be offered to the Almighty.

In this attitude also there should not be any selfish motive. Let us examine a curious illustration. A learned man goes to market and purchases some articles. He engages a rickshaw and gets back home with the articles. The rickshaw fellow demands money for his services. The learned man then quotes the line in Bhagavadgita,

Karmanyevadhikaraste Maphaleshu Kadachana

This means - 'your duty is to perform an act. You should not have any say in the fruit of your deed'. Then the rickshaw fellow says, "I am a small fellow, don't expect me to know about high things. Now that you have enlightened me, I will act without desiring for the

fruit". So saying he picks up the bag of articles lying there and is about to leave the place. Then the learned man realises his folly. Here it is not the learned man's conviction in the stated principle that comes into play, but his selfish desire to exploit the ignorance of the other party. Such deeds only increase the bondage twofold.

Some people declare that they perform acts without any aspiration for fruits. Thieves commit theft and when they are caught and subjected to punishment for their crime, they cleverly say that they did the act of stealing without any desire for its outcome. What they mean here by the outcome is the punishment for their act of theft.

In the same way men in service resort to corrupt practices and they do not like to receive the fruits for their act in the shape of punishment for their misconduct. Even murderers when they are apprehended, declare that they are not interested in receiving the fruit or punishment for their crime.

In all these cases the concerned actors of the deeds exhibit disinclination to receive the fruits, because they are negative. If the fruits are beneficial to them they are ready to receive them.

Some do 'Putra *Kamestiyaga*' with a desire to be blessed with sons. Some do penance seeking power to kill their enemies and some others like Bhasmasura wanting the magic power to kill any person they want by placing their hands on the heads of their targets. These are all instances of *Kamya Bhakti* or devotion motivated by selfish desire. Similar are the cases where people worship different deities seeking different types of desires. A seeker of wealth worships

Lakshmi and a candidate for election gives his hair to Lord Venkateswara. These acts done with strong selfish desires lead to severe type of bondages. If one has to avert bondages he has to perform acts without any selfish desire. The sun gives us sun-shine, Vayu the wind god provides life giving air, trees give us shade and great people lead us in the righteous path. What is the return these agencies expect for their noble acts ? None. Being helpful to others is their nature. Taking their example we must conduct worship and other sacred rituals, charities and philonthropic acts, prompted by the desire of keeping the Almighty in our memory. Only such deeds can be termed acts without selfish ends and do not create any bondages.

3) Performing actions for the welfare of mankind and to please God.

Actions done without any selfish motive and for the benefit of the majority of the community are not Accumulated Karmas. Speaking untruth is a sin. Yet, Sri Krishna induces Dharmaraja to utter in order to establish dharma or righteousness in land. Such acts cannot be classified under accumulated actions. In the same way sacred rituals and worship intended to usher in prosperity for the mankind are not accumulated actions and hence do not generate bondages.

4) Performing the Karmas (acts) in the spirit of dedication to God:-

Whatever *Karmas* we do every day, if we dedicate them to god, they do not become bondages to us. But how to enact that process is the question.

We prepare tamarind rice and curd rice etc and offer them to God as '*Naivedyam*'. In that process they get sanctified as God's '*Prasadam*'. Each of the devotees consumes a little of it, irrespective of its taste or quantity or agreability. This is the way how any thing is dedicated to god. This may hold good in the case of material things which can be easily offered to God with dedication and received back as *Prasadam*. But how to dedicate actions to God and receive them as *Prasadam* is the question.

Even for it, there is a way. At the time of starting a work and during the time of processing it and finally at the time of its completion if one prays to God, it will amount to dedicating the work to God. Not only that, whatever type of results that are yielded by a work, whether good or bad, whether beneficial or harmful, whether small or big, must be accepted by the doer with a sense of gratitude treating the result as God's *Prasadam*.

By following this method, the work becomes a God-dedicated one. In this process, the doer's heart is purified and in the result the doer is enabled to attain Moksha.

The above truth has been stated by Ramana Maharshi as follows in his 'Upadesa saram'. "*Eswararpitam Nechchaya Krutam, Chitta Sodhakam Mukti Sadhakam*".

This type of dedication of Karmas to God is easier than other methods.

As stated above, if one does an act without being conscious that he is the actor, but only an obliger or an agent, not desiring to enjoy the fruits, having the welfare of the community at the bottom of his

heart, and to please the Almighty, and in the spirit of dedication to God that method of approach is termed *Karma Yoga*. So acts done in the *Karma yoga* way obviate the current deeds becoming accumulated karmas and do not accompany us through births and become bondages.

So when we perform acts we must think well and follow the guidelines given in the sacred texts. Even the mind and sense organs must be attuned suitably. Our actions can be compared to an arrow ready to be released to strike the target. As long as the arrow is held in our hands, we have command over it and we should exercise sufficient care before releasing it. Our aim should be to escape from the bondages by targetting our actions in the Karma yoga way.

B) HOW TO AVERT THE ACCRUAL OF BONDAGES FROM PRARABDHA KARMAS

Such of the Accumulated Karmas which ripen for enjoyment at the point of *Jeeva* leaving the body are called Prarabdha Karmas. The *Jeeva* then takes another body or birth for which he is made eligible to enjoy the *Prarabdha Karmas*. The *Jeeva* has to enjoy completely all the *Prarabdha Karmas*. Only then the said karmas get extinguished and the jeeva will be relieved of them.

The great, the intellectual, the sacred and even the devotees can't claim exemption from Prarabdha Karmas. They are just like an arrow released from a bow. The arrow must hit some object or the other. When once it is released it can't be taken back.

"Ennichotla tirigi Epatlu padinanu
Antaniyaka Sani Ventadirugu
Bhumikrottadaina Bhuktulu Krottava

Viswadabhirama Vinura Vema".

We may wander any where and we may experience any kind of ordeals, the Prarabdha karmas do not leave us but chase us. This truth is stated by Vemana in the above verse.

The doer of the karma has to enjoy its fruits. No one, however great he may be, can escape it.

In the epic Ramayana, Rama leaves for forest along with Seeta and Lakshmana on exile. This happens when Bharata is away from capital. On coming back to Ayodhya, Bharata plunges into grief on learning about Rama's exile. He is greatly annoyed at his mother's role thereof and expresses his resentment to her in harsh terms. Then he goes to Vasishtha, their family guru and gives vent to his grief. Vasishtha consoles him and tells him, "Joy, or sorrow, birth or death, fame or disgrace - all these are controlled by Prarabdha and they must take their own course as preordained."

i) If we study Ramayana under this perspective we will perceive who experienced joy and who suffered grief. Examine the case of Sabari. She is an old decrepit, uncivilized tribal woman living in an obscure spot in the forest. Yet she is an ardent devotee of Sree Rama. Her only hope is to see Rama and die at his feet. It never occurred to her whether it is within her reach or not to realise her ambition. Still she hopes to see him and anxiously waits for the occasion. Ultimately that moment arrives. Rama goes to her and presents himself before her. Sabari's joy knows no bounds.

Now look at Kausalya's fate who is Rama's own mother. When she is childless she goes through great agony. When Rama is born

she spends happy days in his company. But when Rama leaves for forest, she is again subjected to deep sorrow. Along with the separation of her son comes the blow of the death of her husband.

On one hand Sabari, a woman who has no kind of any relationship with Rama experiences inexplicable joy, with her life amibition being fulfilled on the other, Kausalya, Rama's own mother is subjected to immense grief arising out of separation from her beloved son as well as death of her husband.

ii) Let us now consider about the effect of Prarabdha in respect of birth and death.

Ahalya is the wife of saint Gautama. She is turned into a stone as a result of her husband's curse. When Sri Rama goes out for the protection of Viswamitra's yaga he touches the stone with his feet and Ahalya gets back her previous womanhood. Contrast this with the fate of Dasaratha, Rama's father. When Rama is exiled and leaves for forest, Dasaratha is immersed in great sorrow. Grief striken, he breathes his last uttering the name of Rama repeatedly in his last moments.

We are able to perceive here that Ahalya, quite unconnected with Rama is restored to her previous birth, while Dasaratha, Rama's own father, meets his end driven to a state of extreme grief, due to separation from Rama.

iii) We will now take for analysis , how in respect of fame and disgrace, events take shape

Ravana is the culprit who abducts Rama's wife Sita. It is Rama's responsibility to punish Ravana. And he ought to take the assistance

of his brothers and the military force of Ayodhya. Curiously neither Rama's brothers Bharata and Satrughna nor the military of Ayodhya knows anything about the war that takes place between Rama and Ravana. It fell to the lot of Anjaneya, Sugreeva, Vibheeshana and Jambavan, who belong to monkey race and Rakhasa race, and who are quite unconnected with either Rama or Ayodhya Kingdom, to participate in the war and snatch away the fame of serving Rama. Then who is it that shared the disrepute in this story ?

Let us now turn our attention to Kaikeyi, Rama's step mother. She tends Rama with profound affection more than his own mother. She is greatly rejoiced at the news of Rama's coronation. But she becomes instrumental in stopping the coronation and sending Rama to forest and becomes the target of disrepute, besides receiving reprimands from her own kith and kin as well as the people of Ayodhya.

All these happenings are the result of *Prarabdha Karma*. We too cannot escape the clutches of the *Prarabdha Karma*. Whatever we experience in the shape of afflictions, losses, fears, pleasures and pains are all due to *Prarabdha*.

When we face adversities in life we feel miserable and unhappy. But we must develop an attitude of preparedness to suffer the fruits of these karmas. We must feel happy that our indebtedness is being wiped out and our karmas are getting exhausted. Let us take an example. We borrow some money from some body for our needs. The debt has got to be liquidated. So at the time of discharge of the debt, we should not feel unhappy for having to part with our money.

On the other hand we should feel delighted for being able to discharge our debt. After enjoying and expending the karmas we should feel relieved for lessening the load of accumulated karmas, in the process.

But it is easier said than done. When one has to face hardship, how can he be cheerful ? How can he bear the brunt ? For that Bhagavan has indicated a good path in Bhagavadgita. In those circumstances one must cultivate devotion towards Lord and worship him. That will strengthen his fortitude to enable him to bear the brunt of miseries arising our of the *Prarabdha Karmas*. This experience is called *Bhakti Yoga*.

A boy returning from the market is knocked down by a cyclist. He is severely injured and beigns to cry, unable to bear the pains. His parents go there, take him to a hospital and do whatever that is needed. They attend to him with due care and affection. Still, the boy, unable to put up with the pain asks his father, "Father , can you take my pain?" The parents can nurse the child in all possible ways but cannot take his pain. Similarly the fruits of one's *Prarabdha Karmas* must be enjoyed by him alone. But if we seek the mercy of God, who is just like our parents, he will mitigate the severity of their painful phase. With his prop we will be able to bear the hardships. We shall have therefore to enjoy or suffer the fruits of *Prarabdha Karmas* and liquidate them through *Bhakti Yoga*.

C) HOW TO AVERT SANCHITA KARMAS RESULTING IN BONDAGES

We have freedom in performing Agami Karmas. By adopting the karma yoga, in the process of performing them, we can avert

bondages. *Prarabdha Karmas* are dissolved by enjoyment in the *Bhaktiyoga* way. But what about *Sanchita Karmas* ? They are the deeds which were performed in several previous births. They are also not amenable for being wiped out by enjoyment, because they are not ripe. They collect and form a bundle and follow us from birth to birth waiting to be enjoyed at an indefinite future time. In order to exhaust them we have to take several births. So if we have to break this chain of births and attain eternal bliss, we have to get deliverance from the bondages of karmas. That becomes possible only when we are able to burn these *karmas* in the fire of knowledge.

Jnanagnih Sarva Karmanam - (Bhagavadgita).

It is stated in Bhagavadgita that all karmas are to be extinguished by burning them in the fire of knowledge. That is the only way of freeing ourselves from all *karmas*. But this is a stupendous task. This is as difficult as walking on a wire in a circus. This process or method of eradicating the effect of the bundle of *Karmas* is called *Jnana Yoga*.

Knowledge defined :

Knowledge is nothing but knowing thyself, that is knowing your own *Atman*.

The real identity of a human being is that of *Satchidananda*. But we identify ourselves with the physical body which is transcient and which we leave at the time of death. We also feel assured that the sense organs which we avail for transacting the worldly affairs belong to us and they are the constituents of our real structure. But in reality the body as well as the sense organs are mere instruments and they are not the 'I' or Atman. Without making a serious effort to know

about the self, to identify the 'I' with the body, mind and sense organs is ignorance. This ignorance will lead us to miseries and fears. We have to get rid of this ignorance and know the self which is nothing but *Satchidananda*. This realisation which one gets through experience is knowledge. This knowledge of self generates fire of awakening. To realise the knowledge of self we need the guidance of a preceptor (*Guru*).

There is a lion in a forest. It gives birth to a cub and dies. The cub lies at the spot helplessly. A shepherd going that way driving his sheep home, sees the cub, takes pity on it and carries it home. He brings it up along with his sheep. The cub eats and drinks along with the sheep and becomes one with them. One day a lion sees the sheep and the cub grazing in the forest. He feels immensely delighted and chases the sheep for killing them for his food. The sheep run fast and along with them the cub too, in a freightened state.

The lion sees the cub also running along with the sheep with fear. He runs fast and takes hold of the cub. The cub shivers with great fear, and pleads with the lion plaintively not to kill it. The lion asks the cub why, being a lion, it is in a frightened state like the sheep which belong to a lower strata of animals. The cub repeatedly asserts that it is only a sheep and does not belong to the family of lions.

Then the lion takes the cub to a tank. Bending into the water he asks the cub to see its image in the water. The cub sees the image of the lion in the water. Then the cub is made to see its own image also in the water. The lion then asks the cub "What do you see in the water?" The cub replies, "I see a lion in both the cases". When the cub sees its

own image, though it feels that it is also a lion, it is at first hesitant and takes some time to feel assured of the fact.

Then the lion roars loudly and asks the cub also to do it. The cub roars for the first time and feels sure that it is only a lion and not a sheep. So feeling the cub walks into the forest like a real lion shedding off its sheepishness and fear.

Till that moment the cub forgets its real state. On account of its association with sheep, it is overtaken by the illusion that it is a sheep. Now that it realises its real state, it gets rid of its previous qualities and begins to behave like a lion.

Just like the cub we forget our identity. The 'I' is identified with the body and sense organs, out of ignorance. When we are really lions, we are under the misapprehension that we are sheep. All our miseries, afflictions and fears spring up because of that erraneous perception. If this illusory conception of our identity has to be removed, we need a preceptor or a preacher, just like the lion in the case of the cub in the above episode. The preceptor dispels our ignorance and helps us to realise our identity. Only then can we become free of all fears, bondages and *Accumulated Karmas*. That is real salvation. To find out our identity with Atman or self is knowledge. That knowledge kindles fire of awakening which consumes all types of *Karmas*.

A doubt may arise in our minds whether these karmas which are accompanying us through several births are really burnt in this fire generated by knowledge of self. This doubt is baseless. The process of the karmas being burnt is automatic and a certainty.

Take the case of a rich man. A beautiful wife, excellent children, excessive wealth and overwhelming comforts, all put together put him in an extremely happy state without sorrows. One night while sleeping in his air-conditioned room on a soft bed, he gets a dream. In that dream he is a poorman with a large family to support. He works as a coolie to be able to support his family. While working he picks up a quarrel with a fellow coolie. From exchange of words they come to blows. The man inflicts a fatal blow, with a crow bar on his fellow coolie and the latter dies. Then the police enter the scene, apprehends the assasin and files a case under sec 302 I.P.C. After a long drawn out trial the judge convicts him and awards him a sentence of harsh imprisonment for 12 years. The poor man is put in jail and is subjected to all types of hard work. An unkind jailor beats him one day mercilessly, when the poor man stops doing work due to tiresomeness. Unable to bear the pain of harsh beating by the jailor, the man cries loudly with great anguish. His wife, sleeping by his side is woken up on account of the cries and inquires, "Did you get a bad dream, my dear ?" Then the rich man wakes up and realises that he had a dream.

Let us now analyse the happennings in the richman's dream. Does he still have any of the hardships which he experienced in his dream ? He suffered 3 years of the total 12 years of imprisonment Does he have to serve imprisonment for the rest of the nine years ? No.

It can therefore be concluded that all the results of his deeds performed in his sleep vanish as soon as he wakes up. In a similar fashion all the fruits of karma done in wakeful moments

(Jagradavastha) get dissolved in Jnanavastha or state of Knowledge. Jagaradavastha or state of wakeful period is a state of ignorance.

In his dream state the rich man forgets his real self, that is that he is a richman. The deeds and their results for which he is the actor, during that state all get dissolved as soon as he realises his self or his real position.

As long as one is in a dream state, whatever happens during that time is real. But no sooner one gets back to his wakeful state then they turn out to be unreal. Similarly whatever happens in wakeful state is real as far as that state is concerned. But the same occurrences become unreal as soon as one attains the state of supreme consummation of knowledge. So if one acquires the knowledge of Self or Atman, all the types of his Karmas get burnt in the fire of knowledge. In this way all the *Sanchita Karmas* also are annihilated.

By performing Agami Karmas through karma yoga way we are able to avert the bondages from the accumulated *karmas*.

By enjoying such of the accumulated karmas that still remain and ripen as *Prarabdha Karmas*, through *Bhakti yoga* way, we are able to expend them also.

Such of the accumulated karmas which accompany us through several births are burnt in the fire of knowledge, in the *Jnana yoga* way. Now the jeeva reaches a stage when he does not have any accumulated karmas accompanying him. In the absence of accumulated karmas, there will be none to ripen as *Prarabdha Karmas*. Since there are no *Prarabdha Karmas*, the question of further births is ruled out. There will be no sorrows or miseries associated with birth, disease,

old age and death. The state of no sorrows is permanent bliss or salvation. The attainment of salvation shall be the main aim of human birth in this world.

A Jeeva in mother's womb who has memory of prior births says to himself "O God, I committed innumerable mistakes. Though you have granted me several human births, I have not availed even one of them to reach you above. At the time of my stay in mother's womb, I used to exhort to myself that I must atleast this time behave sensibly and make good of this birth to realise the self and attain salvation. But as soon as I get out of mother's womb, after undergoing all the tribulations and enter into the world, the great forces of illusion overtake me and again I get entangled in the wordly attractions. Once again I get into the routine of performing the most heinous acts with selfish ends.

"I performed all types of indiscreet acts for the sake of my parents, wife and children and other relations whose connection with me does not go beyond my body and who do not accompany me to the other world. I worked strenuously for acquiring wealth, houses and other earthly possessions, being aware that they do not go with me after death. I spent all my energies for the sake of my wife and children. I am really unfortunate that I strove very little for the attainment of Moksha which secures for me eternal bliss. As a result I had to pass through ignoble and despicable births of all types of mean creatures and animals, and experience immense sorrow. I shall not repeat the same mistakes in the present birth. After getting over the birth pangs safely and entering the world, I will sacrifice everything

for not getting entangled into transcient worldly pleasures and temptations. I will seek the guidance of a good religious preceptor and make my life a worthy one and a sacred one. O Almighty, have the grace to help me achieve my end. I will ever be grateful to you for your munificent guidance."

This is in a nutshell what is contained in 'Garbhopanishad.' The main aim of our human births should be to secure Nirvana through God - realisation.

<u>In Order to attain salvation :</u>

1) We have to perform current actions through Karma Yoga.

2) We have to enjoy the *Prarabdha Karmas* by following *Bhakti Yoga*.

3) We have to annihilate all the accumulated karmas comprehensively, by burning them in the fire of knowledge through Jnana yoga.

If an individual gets emancipated from bondages, by adopting the above process, he is absolved of further births. When there is no birth, there is no death. To get rid of births, and deaths tantamounts to attainment of permanent bliss or Moksha. When once Jeeva reaches the abode of Almighty there is no question of his returning to this world. He dwells near God's feet for ever.

Let us avail ourselves this Human Birth which is difficult to get, for reaching the Paramatman, through proper effort and feel the bliss of fulfilment.